1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

and fish. The girls stay at home and learn the domestic arts, and they accompany the mother when the latter fishes with the hook or goes to the plantation.

Old men are very fond of teaching or lecturing (M.: *smalkaya;* T., P.: *sumalnia;* U.: *sumalnaka*) to the young men whom they generally accuse of being very headstrong; this practice is also current among the old women with regard to the girls. The hearer's ancestors are always represented to him as models of virtue and good conduct. This form of teaching corresponds roughly to that of the sermon in Christian and other churches.

DEATH AND MOURNING

AGONY.—The Miskito, as well as the Sumu, formerly used to starve those who were near the point of death, thinking that it was of no use to keep on feeding them. The Sumu are said to have carried the moribund in the bush to let him die there so as not to be compelled to move away, for in former days the settlement was abandoned at the occurrence of such a calamity. Occasionally a dying person was strangled to relieve his sufferings; first, however, his vitality was tested by placing him in an awkward position, and if he remained motionless, he was choked. In general it must be said that the aged and the sick are much neglected, but there are, of course, many cases to be cited to the contrary.

DEATH.—Death is supposed to be due, not to natural causes, but to the agency of sorcery or evil spirits. A gun is sometimes fired off at the occurrence of a calamity, in order to clear the house of the demons. The women relations of the deceased immediately try to injure themselves by knocking their heads against the house posts, or they attempt to commit suicide by hanging or drowning. All this is, however, only pretense to a large extent, for they know that they will be prevented by the other persons present from harming themselves; they rarely make any effort to injure themselves when there is no one about.

The female relations of the deceased cut their hair off; according to Bell (a: 255; b: 90) this is done under the idea that no one should handle it after the dead person. In former days the Ulwa Indians used to cut their hair off also at the death of their wife (Wickham, b: 208), but nowadays the men of both tribes always keep their hair cut short.

The name of the deceased person must never be mentioned in the presence of his or her relations, to whom that would constitute a grave offense. The spirit is always an object of dread and it hovers around its former home; it is feared that it might materialize by pronouncing its name.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

765 In the evening succeeding the death of a person a sort of "wake" is celebrated, to which the entire village is invited. Plenty of food and intoxicants are served to the guests, and a cow is butchered for its meat in case cattle are raised in the neighborhood.

MOURNING.—When a death occurs in a Miskito village all the neighbors assemble, and the women begin to lament one after the other. First comes the turn of the near relatives, as the wife of the deceased person. She throws a large cloth over her head and sits at the side of the dead body, leaning over him to smell the scent, which is the equivalent to our custom of kissing. Then she begins a sort of crying song or dirge in which she eulogizes the departed, enumerating his good qualities, real or supposed. This song has but one tune and time, but the words are improvised. She asks him why he has left her, if she did not treat him well, if she did not love him enough, and what wrong she could possibly have done him. She keeps on as follows: Who will take care of myself and of your children now? You were such a good husband! You were such an excellent hunter! You never missed the mark and kept us always well supplied with meat! You were so skillful in making plantations; in handling the canoe, the gun, bow and arrow, ax, etc.! We are all so sad now and will never be happy again! Your children are always asking for you! She then menaces the one responsible for this calamity, for death is attributed to sorcery. As she keeps on in this manner, her feelings are worked up, and the final phrases are continually interrupted by sobs. After having lamented in this manner for about half an hour, she dries her tears and resumes her usual occupation as if nothing had happened. One of the other women will then cry over the dead body. This manner of mourning is repeated by the female relations for two weeks after the death of a person, twice a day, a little before daybreak and again at sunset. After this period it may be done by the mourning woman whenever she is sad and reminded of the dead.

Bell has recorded the following song of a Miskito girl from Rio Wawa, mourning for her dead mother; he gives it in English (b:91) and in Miskito (b: 312):

539
765

Alas, mother, poor mother! Alas, mother, where have you gone?
Here are your children crying for you;
Yesterday we were talking together, but now you are lying there.
Alas, mother, did you go from us in anger?
Did we not love you?
Your husband sits outside with his head hung down.
Here the women are sitting with their heads covered,
All for love of you.
But you have abandoned us.
Alas, that I shall never see your face again;
That I shall never hear your voice again.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

The men never shed any tears at the death of their near relations, but they will break out in low lamentations. Upon the death of his wife the Miskito Indian will exclaim as follows: Why did you leave me? Who is going to cook my food now? Who is going to wash my clothes now? Who is going to raise your children? How unfortunate am I! I shall never be happy again! Your children are always asking for you!

This manner of mourning is a common occurrence at the Miskito villages. It is also practiced by the Indians in the Gran Chaco and the Guianas. The Sumu women will also chant eulogiums upon the deceased, but they manifest their sorrow in a much quieter manner.

BURIAL CUSTOMS

Burial by simple inhumation is the present practice. The Miskito dress the deceased in his best clothes and place him in a canoe cut crosswise in two parts, one half of it serving as cover. The Sumu simply wrap the body in bark cloth, as did the Miskito in former days, according to Sloane (b: 279) and Jefferys (46). These authors state that the Miskito sewed the dead in a mat, and did not lay the body in the grave lengthwise, but placed it upright on the feet, with the face directly to the east. Nowadays, however, among both tribes the dead person is laid lengthwise on its back to a depth of 4 or 5 feet.

MISKITO BURIAL CUSTOMS.—The burial ground is generally a short distance from the village. While the corpse is being carried thereto the female relatives renew the mourning and try to injure themselves, but they are watched by the others and are not allowed to harm themselves seriously. Livestock is kept away from the burial ground, as the spirit of the deceased is liable to enter it and cause it to die.

Formerly all the personal property of the deceased, as his tools, ornaments, dogs, etc., were put in the grave, in order to assure him a livelihood in the other world. Division of labor continues in the other life, and archeological investigations from various parts of America have shown that spindle whorls are never found in the same graves as stone celts. The hair of the female relatives is also joined to the corpse. A pine-wood torch is also added in order to guide the latter during his long journey to the hereafter. A small canoe is put in the grave, for the voyage to the underworld has to be effected partly on water, and that country is surrounded by a river which has to be crossed with the aid of a dog. For that reason a dog was also killed at each burial. Nowadays all articles put in the grave are broken so as to prevent the stealing of them, but generally only the useless property of the deceased is buried with him, while the remainder is kept by his family. Formerly even his livestock had to be killed, and the plantations and fruit trees destroyed, so that the living should

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

764 not "rob the dead," thus causing the latter's spirit to linger about doing all sorts of mischief. The property of a deceased is known by the name *platira* (M.) and *bawan, bawani* (S.).

According to Exquemelin (French ed.: II, 275) the Miskito also formerly killed the slaves and servants at the death of a chief, in order to serve their master in the other world, a custom found in ancient America among the civilized tribes from Mexico to Peru. Even his priest (*sukyas*?) was put to death to be at his service in the hereafter. This author goes on to say that at such an occasion the Miskito had the intention of sacrificing a Portuguese slave who had lost an eye by an arrow shot. But the latter persuaded the Indians that only men without any physical defect would be allowed in the future world and that, besides, they were not paying due respect to the deceased by giving him as servant a one-eyed man when there were so many with two eyes who could be used for this purpose. To this the Miskito agreed and the Portuguese's life was spared.

A small hut is erected over the grave, whereto the women repair every day in order to light a fire and prepare food and drink for the deceased. These viands are renewed every day, and are supposed to be consumed by the spirit or soul (*iriāni*) of the dead person. In former days the quality of such food was apparently far superior to that found nowadays on the graves, for Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 254) makes the following statement: "I have oftentimes with my own hands taken away these offerings and eaten them instead of other victuals. To this I was moved, because I knew that the fruits used on these occasions were the choicest and ripest of all others, as also the liquors of the best sort they made use of for their greatest regale and pleasure."

765 Secondary burials appear to have been practiced formerly by the Miskito. According to Exquemelin (Engl. ed.: 254; French ed.: II, 274) the widow opened the grave [a] of her husband about one year after burial. Owing to the great humidity the body would soon decompose. She scraped and washed the bones and dried them in the sun. Then she placed them in a *cabala*,[b] a certain pouch or satchel, which she had to carry on her back during the daytime, and upon which she slept at night. She had to keep this up for a whole year, after which she hung the bag with the bones to the post of her house for another year. After that period she was allowed to remarry. If she had no house of her own she hung the bones at the door of that of her next neighbor or relation. The above act was not performed if the deceased was a single man, but food was carried to his grave. The practice of scraping the bones was also performed by the Indian

[a] This author does not state where the corpse was buried in those days, but we learn from M. W. (309) that the Miskito buried their dead in their huts.

[b] *Kwala* is the Miskito name for cloth.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

woman if her husband was a buccaneer, but men were not bound to carry it out at the death of their wife. Exquemelin does not state what was done ultimately with the bones. The custom points toward the practice of endo cannibalism, which was widespread in South America, and which consisted of grinding up the bones of the deceased and consuming them in a drink. Exhumation has not been mentioned from the Mosquito Coast by subsequent travelers.

SUMU BURIAL CUSTOMS.—Our knowledge regarding the former burial customs of the Sumu is more rudimentary. Cremation and secondary urn burial appear to have been made use of occasionally; in the former case the ashes were placed in an earthen vessel, as did the more advanced tribes of the Pacific slope of Honduras and Nicaragua. The common people, however, were probably merely inhumed.

On account of the dense jungle the old burial grounds are difficult to discover. Sometimes they are indicated by low mounds which yield fragments of pottery and metates, or spindle whorls, greenstone beads, etc. A large one of these burial sites is found at the bank of Rio Punta Gorda, near its junction with Rio Pejivalle; smaller ones can be found in many other parts of the coast. In certain regions of the Atlantic slope of Honduras, apparently occupied formerly by the Paya, as at Bonito Oriental, Piedra Blanca, and Siriboya, there are high mounds surrounded by walls.

In Chontales (Nicaragua), which department was formerly occupied by the Ulwa, secondary burial was practiced; the remains were deposited upon the summit of a hill or in an artificial mound in the savanna. The spot was often marked with a cairn of loose rocks constructed in the shape of a parallelogram, varying greatly in size. The sides of these structures were either sloped or perpendicular, and the edge of the upper surface was furnished with a parapet. Fragments of rude statues placed on them have been found, and it would appear as if there were one or several large ones in the center and a small one at each corner. Boyle (a: 43–44) describes a very large cairn, measuring about 58 by 40 yards and close to 10 feet in height, which stood in the neighborhood of La Libertad on the summit of a mound 60 to 70 feet high.

Rogers (107) gives a short description of masks for the faces of the dead chiefs brought about 1775 from the interior of the Mosquito Coast, undoubtedly from the Sumu country. They were made of clay mixed sometimes with gold dust and were said to be the likeness of chiefs or other prominent persons who had been buried at such places. In many parts of America such face masks were used on mummies; we do not know, however, if the art of mummification was known on the Mosquito Coast. This practice had been observed by Columbus at Cariay (Atlantic coast of Costa Rica) in 1502 and was probably limited to men of rank. Rogers has de-

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

This obstacle overcome, the soul finally makes its entry into *Obul*, the land of plenty.*

THE FESTIVAL OF THE DEAD

The festival of the dead (M.: *sikro, sihkro;* S.: *sdö*) is the most important of the bacchanalian orgies of these two tribes. Its real significance appears to be unknown to the large majority of the present-day Indians; it is certain, however, that it has some connection with the journey of the souls of the deceased to the hereafter.

THE SIKRO OF THE MISKITO.—To most Miskito the *sikro* of to-day is only an occasion for merrymaking and getting drunk. Originally only one *sikro* was made for each deceased person, but nowadays the Indians repeat this feast several times in order to have an excuse for a drinking bout. The custom can still be observed among the "heathen" Miskito of the upper Rio Coco and of Honduras. In the remaining districts of the Mosquito Coast nearly all the Indians belonging to this tribe have been converted to Christianity.

The *sikro* takes place about a year after a death, or rather as soon as the field of sweet cassava, planted especially for this purpose, has come into maturity. Although the Miskito make a great variety of intoxicating drinks (*miala*), the one consumed on such an occasion is invariably prepared from cassava. The fermented root of this plant is generally kept in casks obtained from the foreign merchants, but in former days the drink was left to ferment in large homemade earthenware vessels (*sumi*). The expenses of the feast are borne by the relatives of the deceased, who will butcher one or two head of cattle for this purpose, but all the neighbors lend a hand at the preparation of food and drink, and they even help at the planting and reaping of the cassava.

All the men and many of the women from the neighboring settlements are expected to come, and they begin to arrive, dressed in their best attire, about sundown on the specified day. The festival lasts until all the food and drink has been consumed, that is, two or three days. The women keep apart by themselves, and do not mingle with the men, except in order to pass the calabashes of drink around from one of the guests to the other. Occasionally both sexes

* The Sumu never kill any of the various creatures which they will have to meet on their final journey. When they deprive a toad of its skin for the making of a drumhead, they do not kill this amphibian, but release it again afterwards, and give it a few berries from a certain tree as a payment for its skin. The parents also admonish their children not to ill-treat animals, especially such as may be useful to them on the voyage to the hereafter. Similar conceptions are met with among primitive Indian tribes in various parts of the Americas who have had little or no intercourse with Christians.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

Occasionally both sexes

765 perform very "tame" dances which they have apparently learned
535 from the foreigners.[1] One dance, which does not lack a certain grace, is performed by the young women, forming a half circle. They place the left arm around the neck of their neighbor and perform slow movements of the body to the rhythm of calabash rattles which they hold in the right hand. Occasionally they utter a soft melancholy song.

765 Several young men are continually playing reed flutes or flageolets
533 (*bra*), while others beat a skin membrane drum (*kwábi*) with the palm of the hand. Most of the "music" performed consists of conventional imitations of the voice of animals or birds; the dancers accompany it by imitating the gait or the actions of the particular animal or bird.

765 Toward midnight two or three old men play on very long, stout bamboo flutes, which produce such an unearthly noise as to really scare a stranger. These instruments are said to be blown in order to direct to the feast two or three masqueraded figures which are supposed to come from the forest. As soon as the latter approach the hut all the women run inside, for they are not supposed to see them. The relatives of the deceased person immediately cover their faces with a cloth and then begin to lament and cry, for the masqueraded persons have some connection with the departed one. They try to injure themselves by knocking the head against the house posts, or by inflicting wounds on themselves with the aid of arms, rocks, or other objects, but the guests intercede and prevent them from harming themselves in a serious way. At a *sikro* on Rio Plátano I was witness when an old woman made a deep cut in her arm with the aid of an old, rusty machete. The maskers walk a few times around the hut, but after having been engaged in conversation by the *sukya* they return to the bush whence they had come. In order to induce them to depart some of the men make a strange noise on a flute (*yul*) made from the *klissá* reed and having some beeswax applied to the mouthpiece. As soon as they have left the women dry their tears, and they are again as happy as before, for they know now that their deceased relative will within a short time arrive safely at the land of hereafter.

The head and shoulder piece of the masquerade dress is made of a piece of tanned skin or of the inner bark of certain trees; it is painted red and black. Holes are made in the part covering the face to correspond to the wearer's eyes. Dry grass is used to simulate hair, while a crinolinelike fringe of palm leaves depends from the shoulder piece, so that nothing but the legs of the wearer are visible. The headpiece is surmounted by an upright bar of light wood with the likeness (*lilka*) of a certain animal or object. All

[1] [At the festival of the dead – Analyst]

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

these masks are known by the general name of *yapti*, "mother," yet one is male and the other female, while the third one (if there be one) is said to be the young. These figures are supposed to represent the spirit of some animal, it appears, and they had originally perhaps some totemistic significance. Of the various figures which may appear at a *sikre* I have recorded the following: *Tusfina* (sawfish) *yapti*, *ilili* (shark) *yapti*, *kriksa* (sea gull) *yapti*, *tilka* (tapir) *yapti*, *kyaki* (agouti) *yapti*, *para* (above, over?) *yapti*, *sikra* (banana) *yapti*, and *balbul* (cassava roasted in the ashes?) *yapti*.

The writer was present at a *sikre* celebrated in 1921 at a Miskito village situated at the mouth of Rio Plátano (Honduras), at which the symbol of the *tusfina-yapti* appeared. The two large figures were said to be the father (*dias*) and the mother (*yapti*), while the smaller one was the child (*lukpya*). Each one of these three figures was surmounted by a bar of balsa wood painted in red and black, and provided with teeth on each side so as to simulate the bill of a sawfish (*tusfina*). On the larger figures this bar was about 4 to 5 feet long, 5 to 6 inches wide, and 3 to 4 inches thick, while the small one measured only 3 feet in length and 4 inches in width.

At another *sikre*, celebrated in the presence of the writer in 1921 at Tausin, on an island in Caratasca Lagoon, there appeared only two figures, male and female, of practically the same size, and called *para-yapti*. The bars of balsa wood surmounting the masquerade dress measured about 3 feet; their upper part was carved in the semblance of a human head, on which an old palm leaf hat was placed. Sticks inserted at right angles represented the arms. Both figures were dressed and painted partially in red and black, and had wooden pipes in their mouths. The following morning the boys from the village were running about and playing with these masquerade dresses.

After midnight, when the huge quantity of mishla has produced its effect, the men become very noisy and quarrelsome, and their actions are more or less irresponsible. It is disgusting to see them vomit on the floor and then go and drink again. Old grudges and rivalries are revived, old grievances raked up, and fist fights occur on the slightest provocation. Fortunately the women collect and hide all the weapons at the beginning of the orgy, which fact is already mentioned by Dampier (I, 10), and the fighters can not do each other great harm. Besides, the women try as hard as they can to reconcile the quarrelers, but owing to the state of excitement in which the men are, their mediation is often rewarded by blows. Finally the drinkers tumble down and remain on the ground as they fall. These festivals, however, never degenerate into the wild

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
SA15 Mosquito SA15

765 [786]

and indecent scenes which occasionally take place at the "wakes" of the Negroes who have settled on the Mosquito Coast.

THE SAU OF THE SUMU.—The various Sumu tribes call the festival of the dead by the name *sâu*, which word also means "earth," "ground," "country," "world"; the Bawihka, however, call it *sikro*, as do the Miskito, and like the latter used to carry animal masks on that occasion.

The following details apply to the *sâu* of the Twahka and Panamaka, the writer having been unable to obtain reliable information pertaining to that of the Ulwa. The intoxicating drink for this occasion is prepared from maize and is known by the name *pupui* (lit.: "gray"). All the guests are smeared with black paint in such a manner that they are not recognizable. Members from other tribes are not admitted, but all the young Sumu from far away are expected to come. The females, being always connected with ceremonial impurity, are excluded from the festival itself, but they remain in a neighboring hut to prepare food and drink.

Before the beginning of the festivities the sukya goes to the dead person's grave and deposits there a calabash of *pupui*. The drink is said to be consumed by the buried person and enter the latter's body by way of the navel. To this calabash the sukya attaches the extremity of a ball of cotton thread, which has been spun by the female relations of the deceased. Then he repairs to the hut where the *sâu* is to take place, unwinding the thread as he goes along, and carrying it over the lower tree branches, for it must not touch the ground. If a river has to be crossed, a little canoe with a paddle is tied there to the bank. The distance from the grave to the house may at times reach over several miles. This custom is also found among the Talamanca Indians of Costa Rica and in other areas of both hemispheres.

During the night the sukya, who is the principal actor at the *sâu*, practices incantations, and the spirit of the deceased appears, having found its way by the above-mentioned cotton thread. It is not visible to anyone but the sukya, who converses with it in a mysterious language and gives it the final instructions to be observed for the safe entry into the land of hereafter. Then the supernatural visitor departs. The feast lasts from two to three days, that is, when the thread is found to be broken, a sure sign that the soul has safely arrived at the presence of *Ibaima* (*Ibaki*).

The *sâu* of the Sumu is in general less noisy than the *sikro* of the Miskito. The guests eat and drink continually, but they neither sing nor dance. Melancholy music is furnished by reed flutes (*lara*), cedar drums (*pauta4*, *pauata4*), and short fifes (*una*).

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
SA15 Mosquito SA15

Among some tribes, this ceremony is repeated at a later date. The *Sumo* are said to have practiced circumcision. The couvade is general.

Individual names are derived from some peculiarity or mannerism. Such names were not used to address a person, especially older people.

Puberty.—Puberty ceremonies consist of tests, the details of which vary from tribe to tribe. *Sumo* boys receive serious military training at puberty.

Menstruating women are considered to be impure and are confined to a corner of the house (*Sumo*) or to a special hut (*Mosquito* and *Paya*). They are cleansed by bathing or, among the *Sumo*, by a steam ba[illegible]

Death.—Death is thought to be due to sorcery or to the machinations of evil spirits. People about to die are abandoned in the bush, or they may even be killed. If a person dies in a village it has to be abandoned.

The dead are usually buried in the dwelling, which is abandoned (*Paya*), or, among some tribes, in a special hut. The corpse is placed in a coffin made of a canoe wrapped in bark cloth. Personal belongings, food, and a dog are placed in the grave. Among the *Mosquito*, corpses were sometimes sewed in a mat and placed upright in a grave, facing the east. Slaves, servants, and sometimes a shaman were killed and buried with *Mosquito* chiefs. Early reports of the mummification of chiefs appear to be exceptional and may refer to other tribes. Clay and gold masks of chiefs are reported from one locality, probably *Sumo*.

The dead were mourned in many ways. The relatives cut their hair short, wept, and fasted. A mourning ritual included attempts at suicide, which friends prevented. The women sang songs in praise of the dead. Anniversary ceremonies, held at varying intervals, were intended to appease evil spirits and to aid the soul on its long journey to the hereafter. Shamans invoke the soul in order to discover who was responsible for the death and to ascertain future needs. About a year after death the *Mosquito* hold an elaborate anniversary ceremony, in which face masks and other paraphernalia are employed. The *Sumo* have similar ceremonies which differ in detail. Formerly, a *Mosquito* woman exhumed the bones of her husband and carried them in a bag for a year, subsequently hanging them in the house. She might not remarry for 2 years.

According to Von Hagen (1943), *Jicaque* death and burial customs are a curious mixture of Christianity and their own beliefs. After some preliminary mourning the body, clothed in the garments in which the person died, is wrapped in cloth or bark cloth and buried in the cemetery. A small wooden cross is put at the foot of the grave, and a pot through which a hole is punched is laid at the head. The cemetery is an enclosure on a hilltop, which is walled off, as are Spanish cemeteries.

WARFARE

Most of the information concerning warfare pertains to the *Mosquito*, who were highly organized for this purpose. Undoubtedly much of this